

Social Life and customs



Memories of Yesterday



(from the *Duxbury Clipper* on Feb. 1, 1951)

How did youngsters spend their time around 1815? The anonymous author of *Duxbury Fifty Years Ago* (written in 1864) says he often saw boys "walking in summer days on the along-shore road of Duxbury, with trousers rolled above the knee, studying with great interest, but without a master, the art of navigation."

He adds that "the waters of the sea, flooding the wide basin, came at high tide into little coves and creeks, close up to the easterly side of this road; and there boys, with many varieties of mimic sail-craft, from sloop-rig up to ship, made trial of speed along the shore. Some of them more venturesome, made longer voyage; stripping off their clothes they disclosed shining white body and limbs in strong contrast with nut-brown face and hands; and then with froglike motion they followed their little ships into deep water."

Then at sun-down when the fishermen ceased their work and "the shipwright let fall his axe and saw," the long street "was filled with workmen going northward or southward to their homes, where at open doors and windows, children with their mothers welcomed the housefathers to the sweet rest that follows toil."

On rainy days the fishermen gathered in grocery stores and shoemakers' shops (there were many cobbler shops in Tinkertown) "and told their stories of voyages to the coast of Labrador, or to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland; and skippers, boastful of their fisher-craft told how the storm rose and roared, and how the little ship weathered it." The author notes that the conversation was often coarse and ribald, but "many things go to the fashioning of a man."